



لجنة جبران الوطنية

GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Kahlil Gibran's Life Story to be Portrayed in International Feature Film

Becharreh, Lebanon – August 14, 2012

Dr. Tarek Chidiac, President of the Gibran National Committee of Lebanon, announced the signing of an exclusive Option Agreement with Los Angeles Producer William Nix and the Creative Projects Group. The Option grants the exclusive feature film rights to tell the life story of famed Lebanese author and artist, Kahlil Gibran with the authorization and authority of the Committee. Kahlil Gibran is best known for his iconic series of prose poems, embodied in *The Prophet*, but he was also a prolific painter and author of many other works, including extensive correspondence that illuminates his artistic and romantic self. He lived in the early twentieth century in Lebanon, Boston, Paris and New York. His work emphasized "unity in diversity," through internationalism and respect for various cultures and religions, as well as his own spiritual vision. One of Gibran's most recognizable statements, on service, was echoed by JFK in his 1961 Presidential Inaugural Address. When emphasizing human rights and freedom around the world, recalling the earlier words of Gibran, JFK said "ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country." Gibran's words and works remain timely beacons for the world today, as this film will explore. The Committee will be actively involved in a dialogue and collaboration with Mr. Nix about the biographical feature.

When announcing this Agreement, Dr. Chidiac stated that "we are extremely pleased that with the involvement of Mr. Nix we can finally bring the full story of the short but notable life of the famous Lebanese author and artist, Gibran Khalil Gibran" He further stated that "our Committee will continue to work closely with Mr. Nix, with whom we have enjoyed a productive relationship on other matters, to support and tell the story of the life and work of Kahlil Gibran around the world."

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Mr. Nix and Creative Projects Group have also entered into an exclusive Option Agreement with Lebanese-American screenwriters Grace Shalhoub Yazbek and Rob Shalhoub, who have researched and developed a screenplay that chronicles Gibran's early life story beginning in Becharreh with his family's departure to America, his middle years in Boston, Lebanon and Paris, where he was a protégé of Rodin, and his adult years in New York City. It is both an historical overview and a character study of the man focusing on his ascendancy as an international author, artist and philosopher and the great influences that his mother, his beloved patron, Mary Haskell, and others such as famed publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, had in guiding him. The screenplay includes his return to Lebanon for burial and the creation of the Gibran Museum. This unique museum houses the largest single collection of his works in the world and is visited by tens of thousands of people each year. Ms. Yazbek, a screenwriter now living in Lebanon and Mr. Shalhoub now living in Los Angeles, are siblings and were both raised and educated in Boston.

In addition, Jean Gibran, who co-authored the intimate biography entitled *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (Interlink Books, 1974) with her late husband, the artist Kahlil G. Gibran, will work closely with the screenwriters and Producer as Story Consultant to the production. She will also serve as advisor in matters related to the art works of the elder Kahlil Gibran. Mrs. Gibran lives in Boston, a few blocks from Tyler Street where the author's family lived and close to Our Lady of the Cedars, the Maronite Catholic Church they attended, as well as the Quincy School where the elder Gibran's teachers first recognized his many talents.

Mr. Nix was recently in Lebanon for creative meetings with Ms. Yazbek as well as scouting filming locations. The two of them participated in meetings with the Committee in Beirut, and also with Walid Nasser and Lina Haidar, legal counsel for the Committee, as an initial stage in the development of the production. Further visits to Lebanon, for meetings with investors, advisors and others are anticipated. The Producer and screenwriters have already formed extensive relationships with the leaders of a number of Lebanese and Arab-American organizations in New York, Los Angeles, Washington and other cities to build awareness and support for



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the production. As one example of this, Mr. Nix serves as a Member of the Governance Committee of the International Association for the Study of the Life and Works of Kahlil Gibran that was formed on May 6, 2012 at the Second International Conference on Kahlil Gibran. The Conference was hosted by noted Gibran scholar, Professor Suheil Bushrui, Director of the University of Maryland's Kahlil Gibran Research and Studies Program. Dr. Chidiac was a participant in the Conference and serves as a Founding and Executive Committee Member of the new International Association that was created there.

"It is a great honor and privilege to be granted this opportunity to bring Kahlil Gibran's story to the screen," stated Mr. Nix. "I treasure the support of the Committee for this great project and look forward to continuing our close collaboration."

Dr. Chidiac also announced the Committee's signing of a separate Representation Agreement with Mr. Nix to develop and produce an international art exhibition. That tour is planned in order to better acquaint the international community with the paintings and drawings of Gibran, which are not as well known as his writings. The major art publishing house, Skira Rizzoli Publications is interested in curating and publishing a definitive collection of Gibran's artwork, in several languages, as a companion publication to this international art tour. It is contemplated that the traveling art exhibition will be designed and managed in a venture between Creative Projects Group, Stuart and Beverly Denenberg of Denenberg Fine Arts and Jeffrey Landau of Landau Traveling Exhibitions of Los Angeles, with the advice and guidance of Jean Gibran, in coordination with the Committee.

As reported earlier this year, Kahlil Gibran's best-known fictional work, *The Prophet*, is also being adapted for the big screen in a new production [<http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/press/globally-acclaimed-best-fictional-selling-novel-khalil-gibran-s-the-prophet-to-be-adapted-as-an-animated-feature>] that will involve collaborations across many borders, and whose production and release will precede the biographical feature of Gibran's life story. In this exciting adaptation, each of the 89-year old classic's chapters will be directed by a different award-



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winning filmmaker, with Roger Allers (*The Lion King*) responsible for the connective through-line narrative and Salma Hayek, Clark Peterson and Ron Senkowski as Producers and Steve Hanson, William Nix, Jose Tamez, Jeff Skoll and Jonathan King as Executive Producers for the project. Among the distinguished directors committed to the project are Marjane Satrapi (Oscar nominated for *Persepolis*), Chris Landreth (Oscar-winner for short *Ryan*), Tomm Moore (Oscar nominated for *The Secret of Kells*), Nina Paley (Berlin Film Festival winner for *Sita Sings the Blues*), Mohammed Saeed Harib (creator of hit series *Freej*), Michal Socha, Francesco Testa, Joan Gratz (Oscar winner for *Mona Lisa Descending a Staircase*) and Bill Plympton (Oscar-nominated for *Guard Dog* and *Your Face*). *The Prophet* is one of the best-selling books of all time, having sold over 100 million copies since its original publication in 1923. The Lebanese-born Gibrán is the third most-read author in history, after Shakespeare and Lao-Tzu, and has been translated into more than 40 languages.



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The Gibran National Committee is a non-profit organization formed by the virtue of Decree No. 1618 dated July 10, 1934. The GNC hold the exclusive rights to manage the copyrights, literary and artistic works of Kahlil Gibran as well as the Gibran Museum in his native town of Becharreh. The Gibran Museum is open to the public and exhibits 440 original paintings and drawings of Gibran, his library, personal effects and handwritten manuscripts. The GNC is tasked with the preservation and maintenance of the Gibran Museum and the artistic and literary heritage of Gibran. In 1932, the content of Gibran's studio in New York, including his furniture, his personal belongings, his private library, his manuscripts and 440 original paintings, was transferred to his native town Bsharri by Ms Mary Haskell. Today, these items constitute the exhibited collection of the Museum.

The GNC has an administrative council of eight (8) members elected by the delegates who are in terms elected by the Electoral College. The latter is elected directly by the Becharreh residents. Since its formation, the GNC has taken over the management of the funds derived from the royalties of Gibran's works. Said royalties are mainly dedicated for the assistance and help of the needy residents of Bsharri as well as for other educational and social support for said residents. In addition, the GNC uses said royalties for the publication of Gibran's works and the introduction of same to the new generations and world at large through the organization of conferences, literary competitions and cultural activities.

William Nix is the Chairman of the Creative Projects Group, a creative incubator for the development and production of motion pictures, television programs, music, interactive games, live entertainment, multimedia installations and events.

See: www.creativeprojectsgroup.com.



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